

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-07 AGR-05 SCCT-01 AID-05

DHA-02 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /100 W

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R 091350Z JUL 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4042

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0537

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: EVENTS IN ERITREA: ODDS AND PIECES, BITS AND ENDS

REF: ASMARA 0535 (DTG 090550Z JUL 76)

1. FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE INSURGENT ATTACK ON THE BARATTOLO PLANTATION IN TESSENNEY INDICATES THAT THE DAMAGE IS NOT AS EXTENSIVE AS FIRST REPORTED (REFTEL). THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM IS INTACT, BUT BETWEEN 10 AND 20 PERCENT OF THE COTTON FIELDS WERE BURNED. OUT OF A TOTAL OF ABOUT 100 TRACTORS, 3 WERE DESTROYED AND TEN WERE STOLEN. THE INSURGENTS WHO CARRIED OUT THE ATTACK ARE STILL IN THE AREA OF THE PLANTATION, AND THERE ARE FEARS THAT THEY MAY RETURN TO INFLICT FURTHER DESTRUCTION.

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2. THE JULY 7TH PROCLAMATION BY THE EPMG ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF

A COMMISSION TO RESETTLE ERITREAN REFUGEES TOOK THE ERITREANS BY SURPRISE. THEIR REACTIONS ARE UNDERSTANDABLY CYNICAL AS THEY SEE NO REASON FOR ANY ERITREAN TO RETURN UNLESS AND UNTIL CONDITIONS IMPROVE. AS THERE IS NO PROSPECT OF THAT OCCURRING, THEY WONDER WHO THIS PROCLAMATION WAS DIRECTED AT, THE DOMESTIC AUDIENCE OR THE EXTERNAL OBSERVERS THEY ARE ATTEMPTING TO WOO AWAY FROM THE ERITREAN INSURGENTS.

3. RECENT COMPLAINTS BY CONSUMERS THAT MEAT PRICES HAVE BECOME EXORBITANT, RESULTED IN BG GETACHEW, MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, DIRECTING DEPT OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY TO ENFORCE STANDING PRICE CONTROLS ON MEAT. SELLING PRICES ON BEEF RANGED UP TO ETH\$5.50 PER KILO FOR THE BEST CUTS, WHILE PRICE CONTROL ONLY PERMITS A MAXIMUM OF \$3.50 PER KILO. AT THE CURRENT SELLING PRICE FOR CATTLE (ETH\$550-600 PER HEAD), A BUTCHER IS CLEARLY LOSING MONEY UNDER PRICE CONTROL. THEREFORE, FOR THE LAST WEEK THERE HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY NO MEAT AVAILABLE IN THE BUTCHER SHOPS IN ASMARA. WE UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, THAT NEGOTIATIONS ARE UNDERWAY TO ALLEVIATE THE SITUATION.

4. THE ACTING MANAGER OF EAL HAS ANNOUNCED THAT BEGINNING JULY 12, EAL WILL REPLACE THE FOUR WEEKLY ROUND TRIP ADDIS-ASMARA-ADDIS DC-6 FLIGHTS WITH 720BS. THE AIR FREIGHT SITUATION, HOWEVER, WILL NOT CHANGE, I.E. NO AIR FREIGHT IN OR OUT OF ASMARA WITHOUT SECURITY INSPECTION. HE SAID THAT A SECURITY INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE WHICH HAS BEEN IN ASMARA FOR SEVERAL WEEKS IS TO RETURN TO ADDIS JULY 10 TO SUBMIT THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS ON WHAT SECURITY PROCEDURES TO ADOPT. WE CANNOT ANTICIPATE THAT THERE WILL BE AN EARLY RESUMPTION OF AIR FREIGHT SERVICE.
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